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ABSTRACT

The goal of school staff members is to support the teaching and learning missions of students by establishing an environment that promotes these missions. Adults and authority figures can help stabilize the environment by providing sufficient structure to guide the exercise of student freedom. Because of varied definitions and personal interpretations of the term "discipline," school staff members are often confused about what constitutes good discipline in their own school and classrooms. School administrators and teachers may benefit by establishing a clearer understanding of the basic concepts and principles of discipline. Comprehensive organization and planning to avoid discipline-related problems is referred to as "preventive discipline," and much can be accomplished through a preventive stance. A review of basic but essential concepts and principles can help teachers and administrators support the school and classroom environment by setting conditions that bring about the best in students' potential for learning. Four appendixes include a preventive discipline checklist, classroom behavior management form, and sample classroom standards. (RJS)

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PREVENTIVE DISCIPLINE FOR EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING

A SOURCEBOOK FOR TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS

BY DONALD R. GROSSNICKLE
FRANK P. SESKO

National Association of Secondary School Principals
Reston, Virginia

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DRG
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PREFACE

The goal of school staff members is to support the teaching and learning missions of students and teachers by establishing an environment that promotes these missions. Of course, students do make mistakes, but adults and authority figures can help stabilize the environment by providing sufficient structure to guide the exercise of student freedom.

Because of varied definitions and personal interpretations of the term "discipline," school staff members are often confused about what constitutes "good discipline" in their own school and classrooms. School administrators and teachers may benefit by establishing a clearer understanding of the basic concepts and principles of discipline.

A necessary first goal of all school personnel is to establish an environment in which the distractions that interfere with daily learning and teaching are minimal. This is facilitated by understanding and adjusting school and classroom dynamics.

Comprehensive organization and planning to avoid discipline-related problems is referred to as "preventive discipline." Much can be accomplished through a preventive stance.

This booklet is a review of basic but essential concepts and principles that can help teachers and administrators, as a team, support the school and classroom environment. The focus is on setting conditions that bring about the best in students' potential for learning.

A Solid Foundation for Preventive Discipline

Herbert Walberg (1986) has stated that three categories of factors significantly contribute to student success and learning: student aptitude, instruction, and environment. He and others (1983) conclude that the psychological morale of the classroom strongly predicts end-of-course measures of affective, behavioral, and cognitive learning.

Today, considerable attention is given to various instructional methods that teachers may vary to improve student learning. For example, classroom management of off-task behavior can contribute to educational productivity. With skill and precision, preventive classroom discipline practices can certainly support the teaching and learning processes.

Preventive measures help staff members become more aware of teaching strategies that affect discipline and assist them as they implement new ideas and practices to stimulate interest, involvement, and drive to achieve.

The following pages highlight some of the most effective practices used by teachers and administrators to promote effective discipline in school and classroom. Each school staff member must build his or her own discipline program, communicate it, enforce and support it, and revise it as appropriate.

Building Block #1
Establish Clear Behavior Guidelines

Establish an appropriately structured learning environment. Expectations, philosophy, standards, rules, and regulations must be clearly communicated to students and parents.

Most students seem to learn best in a structured environment. That is not to say that all students in all classes must be seated in straight rows; rather, each teacher must have a predetermined "road map" clarifying and communicating where the class is headed and what behaviors are considered appropriate and inappropriate.

Too much freedom can encourage off-task behavior or "testing" to find the acceptable limits or boundaries. Students should not have to discover by trial and error which behaviors are unacceptable.

Not only must the administrator and teacher be fully aware of what the other expects with regard to carrying out the rules and regulations, but students and their parents must also understand the entire plan of preventive discipline. They should be considered partners.

A complete program might include:

- A written board policy regarding discipline
- Administrator's policy and procedure guidelines
- A parent/student handbook
- A periodic principal's newsletter
- A program to orient students to the rules
- Timely reminders.

School and classroom rules should be mailed to parents, posted in each classroom, and distributed to all students. The rules might also be reviewed at an all-student assembly.

BUILDING BLOCK #2
ADOPT A TEAMWORK APPROACH

Establish a complete discipline plan for staff members, including procedures that focus on preventive discipline strategies. The plan should describe the role of each person.

For a preventive discipline plan to work, each school must have its own written practices for dealing with routine infractions. The person responsible for handling discipline must have clear guidelines for preventing, intervening in, and resolving discipline-related problems.

An effective preventive discipline plan must be thoughtfully developed by local teachers and administrators with input from parents, students, and members of the community. The plan must be periodically reviewed and revised. Local community values must be taken into consideration whenever designing or updating the plan.

Consistency is a keystone in successful discipline practices; no one can look the other way when problems occur.

Instruct new teachers and remind all staff members about the benefits of all faculty members working together as a team, supporting, following, and enforcing agreed-upon policy in a fair and consistent manner.

Providing examples of department standards and individual teachers' rules that support those standards is an excellent way of orienting new teachers or new staff members to the all-school preventive discipline plan. Gaining a commitment from new staff members to operate within the existing plan is the surest way to guarantee success.

Students must recognize that the policies are written for *all* students. Teachers and administrators must not show outward favoritism toward the more well-behaved students.

Building Block #3
Design a Complete Discipline Ladder

Build a complete "systems" approach, including prevention, intervention, and resolution with incremental levels of consequences. The teacher should be the key classroom manager; a disciplinarian should be used only on a limited basis.

Preventive discipline emphasizes lesson plans that motivate and encourage student involvement and participation. However, when problems do occur, teachers and administrators must work together to chart a complete course for dealing with major and minor interruptions both in and out of the classroom.

A simple discipline framework includes:

- In-class warnings
- After-class conferences
- Lunch/after-school conferences
- Phone calls to parents
- Help from counselors.

Referrals to a disciplinarian should be few and far between. Such action should be taken only when the situation is extreme or when teachers have exhausted their own tools for dealing with the problem.

Building Block #4
Teach Self-Management and Self-Discipline

■ Emphasize self-management and knowledge of rights and responsibilities while specifying the benefits of good behavior and the consequences of inappropriate behavior.

Students cannot be expected to follow rules and regulations if they do not understand those rules and regulations. They must also know that they have a right to appeal any disciplinary action. Those rights should be carefully explained to the students at the beginning of the school year with periodic reminders throughout the year. But students should also know that they must be responsible in exercising those rights.

Self-management can be taught gradually; it is unlikely to result only from the maturation process.

Sometimes only negative penalties and punishments are discussed without adequate mention of rewards and recognition. A focus on positive relationships is essential to a positive class climate built on cooperation and teamwork.

Building Block #5
Invite Good Discipline

■ Operate from a stance that invites students to behave positively.

Invitational strategies (Purkey and Strahan, 1986) emphasize trust by providing students with opportunities to make decisions and create guidelines for monitoring their own behavior.

Teachers can continuously plan experiences for students that help them view themselves as valuable, able, and responsible. Supplying feedback on returned papers rather than merely writing a "C" or "D" in red ink conveys support. Sending commendation notices home praising some aspect of the student's performance invites success.

Students must see teachers and administrators model behavior that communicates that they want students to achieve. A succeeding student rarely demonstrates discipline problems. Humanistic relationships discourage discipline problems before they start.

Building Block #6
Focus on Student Success and Self-Esteem

- The teacher should not be perceived by students as being overly authoritative or controlling.

Glasser (1986) has stated that "If students do not feel they have any power in their academic classes, they will not work in school." He suggests that students can succeed when they work cooperatively in learning teams, learn to help each other, and develop a sense of belonging in the class; and when teachers avoid creating winners and losers.

Positive self-esteem and self-concept are important factors that affect student success and discipline. Teachers are in key positions to enhance student self-perceptions by being aware of their critically important part in conveying the worth and value of every student.

Building Block #7
Implement Firm, Fair, and Calm Enforcement

Train teachers and students in preventive discipline techniques, emphasizing cooperation to enhance discipline policies in a calm, matter-of-fact manner, thus minimizing confrontations.

Simply distributing a list of rules and regulations to all students is not adequate. At the beginning of each term, teachers must take time within the classroom to explain rules and why they are needed.

Students must know that teachers will uniformly enforce rules in a fair, firm, friendly, and consistent manner.

A faculty discipline committee should work with administrators to establish guidelines for the school. The committee members may begin by identifying three to five general behaviors on which they may want to focus, such as that students be present and on time, bring all learning materials, respect the rights of others, etc. These standard expectations establish school-wide goals.

Consistency is essential for an effective discipline plan. If, for instance, a discipline plan calls for a student who arrives at school late to be sent to the office for a tardy slip, the program will be seriously hampered if one teacher sends the student to the office while another allows the student to enter class without a slip and without penalties.

Bluffing is always dangerous business. If a teacher makes threats that are not supported by the administration, such as "You'll never be back in my class again," the teacher may find himself or herself in the embarrassing situation of having to back down.

One of the most important traits of an effective teacher is the ability to apply the rules consistently for every student. Enforcement of rules and the consequences of misbehavior must be predictable. Teachers cannot look the other way one time and overreact another.

A stable environment depends on everyone's knowing and following the accepted rules. The teacher's mood should not affect daily discipline.

BUILDING BLOCK #8
PLAN LESSONS THOROUGHLY

Plan positive and creative lessons that stimulate student success. Design realistic opportunities for achievement while considering learning style/teaching style preferences. Use student input when appropriate.

Learn to personalize whenever possible. Know individual student strengths and limitations. Avoid lesson plans that favor the teacher's preference rather than ones that work best for students. Plan to be motivating, interesting, enthusiastic, and relevant.

Apply lessons to student experiences, careers, and students' future needs. Help students experience satisfaction and improved self-esteem through legitimate success. Learn to anticipate or recognize warning signs or symptoms of learning and behavior problems.

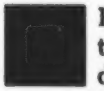
The only effective way for a teacher to deal with a difficult situation is to carefully plan ahead how to respond. Teachers should understand that students will not always "carry on as usual" the day before a holiday or before vacation. They should plan activities accordingly.

In addition, substitutes should be provided with a folder detailing not only the lesson plan for the day, but also a carefully prepared seating chart, bell schedule, and any characteristics of the class that might be helpful. The more the substitute knows about the students and the routine, the easier it will be for him or her to control the class.

If a teacher becomes aware during the first days of school that a particular student may become a problem, the teacher should take immediate action, such as meeting with the student's counselor and the disciplinarian. A few words with former teachers to find out how they handled the student in the past may also be appropriate.

In addition, a parent conference early in the year may be a way of involving the parents in preventive discipline.

Building Block #9
Continuously Monitor Classroom Environment



Be aware of the classroom environment, thus minimizing the possibilities of off-task behavior and classroom disruptions.

An effective teacher is up and around the room, whether teaching a lesson, supervising seatwork, or monitoring a test. Teachers who have the most difficulty with student disruptions are frequently those who spend the majority of their time sitting behind their desks.

Once again, the teacher must carefully plan ahead. When students are working on in-class assignments, it is essential that a supplemental task be available for students who complete the work early. And, when instructions are given for in-class assignments, they must be clear. "I don't know what to do" is a frequent excuse of students who become involved in off-task behavior.

Building Block #10
Minimize Problems Early

Build a win/win relationship among staff members, parents, and students.

For teachers and administrators to deal effectively with students and their parents, they must realize that not every incident must be a win/lose situation.

When addressing a problem between a teacher and a student, the administrator may act as a mediator whose primary goal is to return the student to the classroom, ensure that the student feels successful in the class, and ensure that the teacher can instruct without student disruptions.

When parents are included in the discussions, teachers and administrators must be fair and stress to parents that they have the students' well-being at heart. School staff members must have the support of the parents.

A teacher should feel free to ask the student's dean or counselor for suggestions about dealing with the student. It is sometimes helpful for a teacher to call a parent to discuss symptoms of a potential problem and to ask for assistance in dealing with the student.

SUMMARY

Educators hold a demanding and challenging job. Frequently, home problems spill over into the classroom and emerge as behavior problems. Therefore, educators—especially teachers—must have abundant patience and a well-trained repertoire of skills.

Administrators and board of education members must communicate their support to teachers. Too frequently, teachers feel "double-crossed" and unsupported by weak administrators who coddle chronic offenders. Adequate measures must be available to ensure a safe, supportive classroom climate, or learning and teaching cannot occur. The best stance is a preventive one.

The following list highlights several key preventive actions that can limit discipline problems:

- Establish an orderly, businesslike, but comfortable class environment.
- Emphasize teacher planning to stimulate student interest and involvement at the beginning of class as well as during independent student work.
- Examine student perceptions about the teacher's willingness to provide personalized help that may lessen student anxiety and frustration and encourage effort and involvement.
- Avoid a steady routine of lecture and teacher-dominated activities. Encourage teaching skills that include variety and enthusiasm.
- Integrate course content with student experience and plans for the future.
- Use student input in planning class activities when appropriate.
- Use praise and appropriate reinforcement techniques, and offer opportunities for realistic success for every student.
- Avoid trying to motivate students in ways that may actually be offensive and ineffective.
- Be flexible enough to adjust the learning process to individual student needs, learning styles, and difficulties.
- Identify and assist students who require remediation in basic skills.
- Encourage cooperation and peer support rather than intraclass competition.
- Carefully examine grading and grouping policies, practices, and procedures that inhibit student effort.

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Appendix A
Preventive Discipline Checklist

Do

____ 1. Reinforce attention to common values, help students help themselves achieve their goals.

____ 2. Clarify *why* students are in your class or in school. (Very simply, state consequences of not accepting the "rules.")

____ 3. Divide and conquer—hold *individual* meetings with students as they work on assignments that are at their level.

____ 4. Design motivating "grabbers" to stimulate interest at the opening of class. Tell them what to do. Leave them alone. Provide specific corrective feedback. Let them relate the knowledge to their own world, share with others.

____ 5. Legitimately praise, affirm, encourage.

____ 6. Gain control. State simple, specific rules and specify consequences of not following them.

____ 7. Get to know the students, use inventories, etc.

____ 8. Involve students in some decisions regarding planning, learning methods, and activities.

____ 9. Identify and respond to learning problems or difficulties, especially in reading and math.

____10. Decode student's reasons for not trying, and understand their major sources of problems.

____11. Use calm discipline.

____12. Use contingency contracting using Glasser's Reality Therapy.

____13. Be friendly but firm, always consistent, and careful about edicts, threats.

____14. Quickly shake off the class's attempt to sabotage the agenda. Stay on task.

_____15. Send home praise at least once every three weeks. (Must be legitimate and in writing.)

_____16. Find something every student is good at and build on this.

_____17. Visit teachers who are good at working with problem students and try their methods.

_____18. Use an appropriate variety of methods and activities, but only as much as their ability to adjust to freedom and structure allows.

_____19. Correct misbehavior quickly and quietly.

_____20. Know every second what's going on all around the class/-room.

_____21. Design circumstances around likely opportunity for disturbances.

_____22. Flatter students with challenging assignments instead of demeaning them with simple busywork.

_____23. Listen carefully to what students say.

_____24. Know when to refer students to administration.

_____25. Use the counselor and psychologist for advice and consultation.

_____26. Require students to keep written track of their academic progress.

_____27. Use tested steps suggested for resolving conflict.

_____28. Establish a plan and stick to it. Avoid changing so much that anything you try doesn't get a fair chance to work.

_____29. Make directions and instructions very clear.

_____30. Take care of small things, but don't be petty. Know the difference. Don't avoid problems, they seldom go away.

_____31. Distinguish between "bad" kids and "bad" behavior. Go after the behavior. Communicate support for their individuality and communicate a liking of every student. Never give up.

_____32. Support school wide rules.

_____33. Become capable of handling your own problems. Project confidence.

_____34. Consider the maturity and readiness level of each student.
_____35. Avoid favorites.
_____36. Emphasize relevant applications to student careers or future.
_____37. Use "I" messages to feed back your concerns in a non-judgmental nonpunitive manner.
_____38. Use class meetings to help solve problems.

DON'T

_____ 1. Don't use group discussions/lectures as a daily routine.
_____ 2. Don't fall into known roadblocks and pitfalls of communication and motivation.
_____ 3. Don't be afraid to contact parents and request their help.
_____ 4. Don't use anger, threats, humiliation, criticism, or group punishments.
_____ 5. Don't manipulate or become overly controlling. Invite participation.
_____ 6. Do not allow negative talk.
_____ 7. Don't send all the problems to the administration.

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APPENDIX B

SAMPLE
DISCIPLINE PHILOSOPHY, GOALS, AND OBJECTIVES

High School District 211 discipline policies and procedures are the product of common understandings and society's expectations of our schools. If our democratic society is to flourish, and our ways of living and believing to endure, we need young people who cherish, understand, and practice these ideals above personal gratification.

School discipline should protect and nurture the physical, social, mental, and emotional growth of its youth. Regulations are made, first, to protect persons and property, and second, to protect the right to participate in every facet of the educational program. The schools' discipline policies reflect an understanding of adolescent human maturation. The schools' policies specifically limit the opportunity of any individual to interrupt another student's educational growth. School policies also protect the student who might choose to interfere with his own educational growth. As each student proceeds through his high school years, greater levels of self-control are expected. We believe discipline exists to make possible a good educational program and to protect the welfare of those who participate in the program. To this end we recognize four axioms:

1. Discipline policies and procedures recognize the inherent dignity and rights of each individual.

2. Discipline policies and procedures focus upon devotion to humanitarian principles and ideals and loyalty to the principles of freedom, justice, and equality.

3. Discipline policies and procedures serve to direct behavior and yet encourage personal effort extended toward self-direction.

4. Discipline policies and procedures strive for student recognition and understanding in that one often has to subjugate one's personal inclinations, whims, comforts, and even some liberties to achieve greater goals than personal ones.

Those charged with the responsibility for guiding students who misbehave recognize and accept society's challenge and trust. Each disciplinarian is an example of the democratic process in action. Individual students must be regarded as having young minds not yet adult. Actions must be taken in accordance with each individual's best interest while considering the welfare of the school's society. Disciplinarians should, therefore, subscribe to the following democratic principles and goals to guide their practices as they help young people grow toward self-direction and self-fulfillment.

1. All students have worth and dignity.
   a. strive to use positive ways of guidance which help communicate belief in self-worth.
   b. recognize student needs in relation to their personal histories.

2. All students have the capacity to learn cooperation and respect for others.
   a. provide a climate in which mutual respect and trust are possible.
   b. provide opportunities for understanding by encouraging communication between people.

3. All students should understand the policies which affect them.
   a. provide a variety of opportunities to students for familiarization with policies and procedures.
   b. provide students the reasons for policies and procedures.
   c. provide opportunities for students' growth in democratic government by providing channels for their concerns and suggestions.
   d. provide an opportunity for students to foresee the consequences of their behavior.

4. All students with special needs should be referred to those specifically trained to help them.
   a. approach student behaviors individually, searching for causes while attempting to change unacceptable behavior.
   b. assist young people in understanding the reasons for their own behavior and develop more effective ways of resolving conflicts.
   c. recognize, in some instances, greater professional expertise and facilities exist outside the school.

5. Parents must accept a participating role with that of the school and its staff in preparing children for productive and fulfilling lives.
   a. provide direction to staff and involve parents in adjusting student misbehavior.
   b. provide opportunities for parents and students to jointly solve problems.

6. Some parents and students can create problems which are damaging to themselves or to the school's society.
   a. make recommendations and take action which preserves the school's society.
   b. make recommendations and take action which reduces self-damaging actions.

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APPENDIX C

SAMPLE
CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT FORM

Student Name _____ Serial No. _____ Year _____

Teacher _____ Subject _____ Period _____

The above student's behavior has been disturbing the class and my ability to teach. Specifically, the problem is:

_____

_____

_____

As the classroom teacher, I have taken the following steps to correct the problem.

Step 1: An *AFTER-CLASS DISCUSSION* was held on _____ with the student regarding the above problem. The student reaction to the problem and my suggestions for improvement were:

_____ Favorable _____ Unfavorable _____ No reaction

_____ _____

Teacher Signature Student Signature

Step 2: A *FORMAL TEACHER/STUDENT CONFERENCE* was held on ____ at _____ (Date) _____ (Time).

The problem was again discussed and the student warned that further misbehavior would result in a referral to office 105. The student reaction to my suggestions for improvement were:

_____ Favorable _____ Unfavorable _____ No reaction

_____ _____

Teacher Signature Student Signature

Step 3: *PARENT PHONE CONTACT* was made on - Phone Number - The parent was advised of the problems and the steps taken thus far by the teacher to remedy the problem. The parent's support was requested. Parent reaction was:

_____ Positive _____ Neutral _____ No reaction

Step 4: The following *RESOURCE PEOPLE* were consulted:

A. Department Chairman: He/she made the following recommendations:

_____

B. Guidance counselor: He/she provided the following assistance:

_____

Step 5: **THE PROBLEM PERSISTS.** I want this student to be seen by an *ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL*. Send this form and the student to 105.

_____

_____

_____ _____

Date, Time Student Sent Teacher Signature

To Teacher: The Assistant Principal will write a referral, copies of which will be sent to you and the parent. You are urged to contact the Discipline Office at the end of the day to learn of the disposition of this manner.

BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT ACTION PLAN

I. Restate the problem in specific terms:
(teacher viewpoint)

II. Restate the problem in specific terms:
(student viewpoint)

III. Action Plan/Behavior agreement:
(A commitment to improve)
Provide a description of what the student should do differently

IV. Consequences:
State consequences of not abiding by the agreement in III above.

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APPENDIX D

SAMPLE
CLASSROOM STANDARDS

I. BE PRESENT AND ON TIME

A. Good attendance is important to succeed in a language class. Explanation/participation in listening, reading, speaking, and writing are daily components in a language classroom.

B. A truancy will result in an F for the work for the day.

C. An unauthorized absence will result in a grade reduction of the work for the day.

D. A pre-excused/school-related absence means the student should have work for the day completed before being excused. Teacher discretion may allow variation. The student should, however, be prepared to take a quiz or test should it fall on the day of his/her return.

E. If a student is absent for several days, he/she should follow the assignment sheet. If there are questions regarding the work assigned, the student should call his/her teacher for clarification.

F. The tardy policy will be enforced by the classroom teacher (room/seat at teacher discretion). The student is to remain in his/her seat until the dismissal bell rings.

II. BRING LEARNING MATERIALS

A. The student is expected to come to class with pen/ pencil, paper, text, notebook/folder, lab book (if applicable).

B. Passes to lockers for the above materials will not be issued.

III. RESPECT OTHER PEOPLE AND THEIR PROPERTY

A. At all times the student should act with courtesy toward teachers and other students. Both their actions and words should reflect this courtesy.

B. The student is responsible to keep all school property (books, classroom materials) in good condition.

C. The student will exhibit proper classroom behavior which includes:
   1. No eating in class.
   2. No feet on desks, book racks.
   3. No writing on desks or bulletin boards.
   4. No tossing paper on the floor.
   5. No work other than the work for this class being done during the class.
   6. No cheating.

IV. BE PREPARED TO PARTICIPATE

A. Grading
   1. Determination of the quarter
      a. Quizzes (1/3)
      b. Exams (1/3)
      c. Oral (oral quizzes, participation, effort, attitude, homework) (1/3). Daily attendance is important to achieve maximum performance. Attitude and effort maximize performance as well.
   2. Variations of the above fractions may occur in upper level courses. Special projects, book reports, etc., may be included and assigned a value.

B. Homework
   1. The student is expected to come to class with learning materials listed under Part II. Assignment sheets will be prepared regularly by the teacher so that the student will always be informed of his/her daily responsibility.

National Association of
Secondary School
Principals

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